

### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for determining mutation load in a somatic cell is determined by mutation analysis of the p53 gene. The p53 gene has been found to be a useful indicator of predisposition to spontaneous mutations or prior carcinogen exposure. Cells that contain mutated p53 tend to accumulate the mutant protein. Thus, DNA from a cell identified by p53 accumulation is amplified and the amplification product further analyzed for mutations in the p53 gene.

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